
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

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1928 October 25

Utica, NY - Campaign Speech

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Senator Brown (Applause), my friends of Utica.
 I am glad to come back here. I have only been in town
 two hours, but I am certain of one thing, and that is
 that Utica is going Democratic in November (Applause.)

And it is absolutely in line with what I have
 found during the past ten days as I have travelled
 through up-State New York. A little over a week ago we
 started out; the Democratic Ticket started in Orange
 County, and we kept on going out through the Southern
 Tier, Binghamton, Elmira, and clear out to Jamestown,
 proceeded in the truly Democratic way, a motor caravan,
 no private trains for us. (Applause.) And everywhere
 that we went we have found the most extraordinary enthus-
 iasm that I can recollect in a long chapter, a long
 history of campaigning in the State of New York. There
 were men and women -- and I think I can emphasize that
 word "women", because I have never seen them turn out so

magnificently before (Applause) -- and after we had ^{once} reached Buffalo and had come back to Rochester and ^{the} Syracuse, and in all those cities found that same enthusiasm, great halls packed with people, and great overflow meetings -- such as we have heard out beyond that wall (applause) -- then we went off for a little excursion into the north woods. I had been up in the north woods before, and sometimes it has been very cold for the Democrats (laughter), but this time, though, while there was snow lying on the hills, we found warmth at every side, we found people talking and taking an interest in the campaign, and coming forward by the hundreds, and the predominant note was two-fold.

First, that the Democrats, the Democratic organizations, are on their toes as they have never been before in my lifetime; and the second was, everywhere we came, men and women would come up to our automobile and say, often in a whisper -- because they have not got to saying it out loud yet -- "I am a Republican, but I am going to vote the Democratic Ticket. (Applause.)

And as I have been going around this State I have been following the very good custom of a gentleman

who started it in 1918 and has been using it ever since, of taking up point by point the great issues before the people of this State. That gentleman today is applying the same methods of going with the facts before the people of the United States and they are appreciating it just as we have ever since he has been our Governor. (Applause.)

Tonight I am bringing to the voters of New York a formal indictment, an indictment which was found by a jury composed of those same voters, an indictment not against the rank and file of the Republican Party in our State, but a true bill against the Republican Leaders of that party. (Applause.) It is not an indictment against the rank and file of the Republican Party because hundreds and thousands of Republicans have joined the forces of progress in every election during the past few years, and that is why Alfred E. Smith has always won. (Applause.)

I want to start in by citing to you the words of a very remarkable document called the Republican State Platform of 1928. It says: "Among the important achievements standing to the credit of the Republican Legislature

are the enactment of measures to carry out the program of building construction, to perfect reorganization of government, and to provide for the application of moneys for all State construction, and railroad crossing elimination, as authorized by the vote of the people."

(Laughter.) and I want you all get notebooks and pencils.

Last night and the night before I talked about another steal, the attempt to steal the water power of the people of the State of New York by these same Republican leaders. Tonight I am going to talk about a different kind of theft, the attempted theft of the credit for all that has been accomplished in the line of governmental progress in our State during the past ten years. The theft of that credit from Governor Alfred E. Smith. (Applause.)

Yes, I am afraid that the present Republican leaders, in line with their recent history of -- well, we will be polite, we will call it utter stupidity -- assuming that the people of the State have lost their memory. And I want to go back very briefly just for three years, to the year 1925, and I want to cite chapter and verse to prove the obvious and outstanding fact

that every constructive achievement in our State Government during the past few years has had the opposition of the Republican leadership until the measures were forced through by the definite popular approval of the leadership and the recommendations of Governor Smith (applause), and I wish you all had notebooks and pencils, I wish that I could assume I were teaching a history class, because the simple little facts are worth recording. So, to go back to that year 1925, point No. 1, there was submitted to the State a plan for the issuing of one hundred million dollars of bonds, state bonds, over a period of ten years, ten millions a year, for prominent public improvements of all kinds. The record shows that the plan originated with Governor Smith; the record also shows that in the campaign of 1925 the voters of this State were asked to oppose this plan by the following Republican leaders, and we will call the roll. (Laughter and Applause.)

No. 1, former Governor Nathan L. Miller.

No. 2, former candidate for Governor, Ogden L. Mills. Every effort was made by the Republican leader-

ship to Senator Knight; former Lieutenant Governor

Lowman; the late Mr. George Morris, Chairman of the Republican State Committee; Senator Hewitt, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance; former Speaker Machold, now at the head of a great water power company; former Governor Whitman; Assemblyman Hutchinson -- he does not come so far away from here -- Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means; well, I could go on and cite you several dozen more names of prominent Republican leaders, other distinguished gentlemen who with those names I have cited today have a stranglehold on the policies of the Republican Party of this State, just as they have had during the years we are talking about.

Governor Smith made clear in 1925 that the former haphazard, happy-go-lucky policy of financing much-needed public work, such as prisons, normal schools, hospitals and so on, need be replaced by a comprehensive, businesslike, systematic plan for capital expenditures. The State had fallen far behind, as we know, behind its growing needs, and drastic action had to be taken. Every effort was made by the Republican leadership to defeat this logical, businesslike suggestion

of the Governor, but I do not need to remind you that the voters of the State thought differently, and the plan was adopted in the November election.

Now, let us analyze that vote very simply. It is interesting to note that although the amendment for the bond issue was approved by the State as a whole, its worst defeat occurred in certain counties, completely under the thumb of the Republican political machine. Which ones? Well, let us take Chautauqua, that is the county of Speaker McGuinness, and the vote in Chautauqua County was 13,000 against the bond issue and 3,000 for it. Very significant.

Take Fulton County, not far from here, the bailiwick of Assemblyman Hutchinson; the vote there was 6400 against the bond issue, to 1800 in favor of it.

Take Jefferson County, another neighbor of yours, the stronghold of former Speaker Machold, now the Republican State Chairman, the vote there was 11,600 against the bond issue to 4500 for it.

Take Livingston County, the home of former Senator Wadsworth, the vote was 5100 against it, to 1300 for it. And finally, take Wyoming County, where Senator

Knight holds fort, the vote was 5900 against the amendment, to 1100 for it.

These instances, my friends, are scarcely necessary to prove the well-known fact that the Republican organization leaders did their best to defeat the building program.

Now, put down this in your notebooks, the little note that in the Republican platform of 1928 they take credit for this building program, and note further, that in his speech of acceptance my friend Mr. Ottinger also warmly endorsed the completion of the State building program. (Applause.)

Let us take point No. 2. You people here haven't got quite the same interest in grade crossings as they have in Syracuse. You are lucky; and Syracuse is going to be lucky too, when they get those grade crossings eliminated under the bond issue initiated by Governor Smith. (Applause.)

In that same year, 1925, there was submitted to the people of the State another bond issue, one for the elimination of grade crossings throughout the State over a period of years, a program, of course, that will

take a long time to accomplish. The Republican leaders did not dare to come out openly against this amendment during the campaign, except one gentleman, Lieutenant-Governor Lowman, who, I believe, has a position down in Washington now (laughter), something to do with law enforcement (laughter), and of course, as a result, I take it that the State of New York is now bone dry. (Laughter and Applause.)

Well, Lieutenant Governor Lowman made a speech up in Buffalo advocating that the people of the State vote against the grade-crossing proposition. It is also a matter of record that in those counties that I have been talking about, the counties controlled by those same Republican leaders, the vote against the grade crossing amendment was overwhelming. Fortunately, again, the people of the State as a whole supported the recommendation of Governor Smith (applause), and I was told in a moment of confidence by one of the inner circle of this Republican organization, the Republican leaders, that they were afraid to come out openly against grade-crossing amendment lest some grave disaster occur during the progress of the campaign. That is the real

inside reason that prevented more open opposition. Take out your notebooks again and jot down the fact that in this year of 1928 the Republican Platform says in regard to grade crossings, "This is one of the greatest activities in which the State has ever entered," and, furthermore, that my friend Mr. Ottinger has been praising the elimination of grade crossings in every speech which he has been making during the past two weeks. Readers not only opposed it in the legislature,

Well, let us take up the third thing that happened in 1925. There was submitted to the voters of the State that year the matter of the reorganization of our State Government. First of all, we have got to jot down the fact that this issue would have been presented to the voters in 1921, instead of 1925, if Speaker Machold had not deliberately defeated the proposed amendment when it was presented in the Assembly for the first time. Everybody knows the splendid results that have come from this great constructive reform, the consolidation of 180 different departments, boards, bureaus, commissions and everything else, into eighteen consolidated and responsible departments. In Fulton County

it was 3,300 against to 1,900 for.

This reorganization is being copied in many of the States of the Union, and we, as New Yorkers, State ought to be extremely proud of the fact that our State Government today is being held up as a model everywhere else throughout the United States (Applause.)

But if you go back into the history of our own State, you will find proof that from 1920 up to the time when it was finally submitted in 1925, the Republican leaders not only opposed it in the Legislature, but opposed it as a party at the polls. Here the possible and probable loss of our old friend, Miss Patronage, was the compelling motive, and these Republican leaders were fully willing to put patronage ahead of the need for a businesslike reorganization of their State Government.

In the annual election of 1925 let me again offer further proof by the vote in those counties controlled by these gentlemen with whom I still have a quarrel. In Jefferson County the vote was 10,000 against reorganization to 5400 for it. In Chautauqua County it was 10,000 against, to 4800 for. In Wyoming County it was 5,100 against, to 1,600 for. And in Fulton County it was 5,800 against to 1,900 for.

other was Yes, jot down the next step, that the Republican Platform of 1928 lists reorganization of the State Government as one of their accomplishments, and my friend Mr. Ottinger says, "I am in complete accord with consolidation of the stated departments." (Laughter and Applause.)

I take a good deal of personal pride that although I live in the old Republican rock-ribbed county of Dutchess, we people down there are less tied to those leaders' apron strings, and in the 1925 election we gave a fine majority to all three of Governor Smith's proposals. (Applause.)

Now, come down two years later to 1927. Nine amendments were submitted to the people of the State of New York; never mind the number of them that were more or less technical. Two of those received a great deal of attention; there was bitter debate about them all over this State; they were talked of in a campaign when there was no Presidential election, no State gubernatorial election, and the people had plenty of time to make up their minds about those amendments. One of them was the proposal authorizing the Executive Budget. The

other was the proposal for a four-year term for Governor.

In the case of the Executive Budget, that suggestion had been made for years by Governor Smith, who happens to be about as good a businessman as he is a Governor. (Applause.) The proposal for this budget was finally approved by the Hughes Commission on the Reorganization of the State Government, and the matter was submitted to the voters a year ago. Right there we might as well take note of the fact that the appointment of that great jurist, Charles Evans Hughes, was forced on the Republican leaders by Governor Smith himself, and you can put it down now in that little notebook that my friend Mr. Ottinger in his speech of acceptance gives all the credit to Mr. Hughes, and not one jot or tittle to the man who put him there, Governor Smith.

This Executive Budget was always opposed by the handful of Republican leaders ever since Governor Smith went into office. It was adopted by the people of the State by a large majority, except, again, in that handful of counties which still remained under the thumb of the outworn Republican leadership. at all."

On the other point, coming up last year, that

same Hughes Commission approved the recommendation of Governor Smith for the four-year term of Governorship. I am mighty glad personally that it did not go through. (Laughter.) Two years is quite enough to think of at one time. (Applause.) But, of course, as a matter of good business, the Governor of this State ought to be elected every four years, instead of having this constant turmoil every two years; and, as a matter of good business, the Senators of this State ought to be elected for a four-year term, the Assemblymen for a two-year term, and the Legislature ought to meet only once in every two years. (Applause.) We would all be a lot happier if the Legislature did not meet every year. (Laughter.)

But that same Republican Legislature, thinking first of partisan advantage, tried to place the Gubernatorial election in Presidential years, in spite of a growing belief that there should be a clear line of demarcation between State and National issues. The Republican leaders in effect said to the people of the State, "Take it our way or you won't get it at all." Well, the answer of the people was perfectly clear.

They preferred not to have it at all. Democratic candi-

The issue was debated up and down the State, and it was made clear by the final vote, two to one against the proposal to elect a four-year Governor in Presidential years — it was made perfectly clear that the people were unwilling to have State issues come to the front in the heat and confusion of a Presidential year.

We in this year have an excellent example.

As we pick up our papers in the morning we find column after column, very properly, dedicated to the great issues of the Presidential campaign. And a great many people, including myself when I am busy, very often don't get much beyond the first page of the paper. And somewhere, on the third or fourth page, or the back page, you will find a little story about State questions, and if you have searched diligently you will have found that there is a State campaign going on this year, as well as the much greater issues of electing Governor Smith. (Prolonged Applause.)

And if you have found on the inside of your papers stories about the State campaign, you will recog-

nize that on the one side there is a Democratic candidate who believes in trying to get elected on State issues, and not trying to ride into office on the coat-tails of somebody else. (Applause.)

And perhaps in the next column you will read the fact that my friend Mr. Ottinger is today basing most of his appeal for election as Governor on the national issues being presented by Mr. Hoover. The other day he made a remarkable speech about prosperity. (Laughter.) You seem to know all about it, so I don't need to go into it any further. He went on, and I think I have got the words about right. He said, "You know, my friend Mr. Hoover, when he is elected, is going to abolish poverty throughout this country." (Laughter.) Well, my friends, on the strength of prosperity and the abolishing of poverty throughout the United States by Mr. Hoover, I suppose everybody ought to vote for Mr. Ottinger for Governor of the State of New York. (Laughter.)

One final word about the position of the Republican State leaders against any form of public improvement. Every one knows about the magnificent park program initiated under the leadership of Governor Smith.

Everyone knows also of the struggle which he has had to with the Republican Legislature to carry out his plans. The program is being carried out in spite of the attacks of the selfish group of millionaires down on Long Island, including such people as W. Kingsland Macy, the Republican leader of Suffolk County, and active in the management of the Hoover campaign in the State of New York.

I am confident that whether it be on Long Island or in the great cities of the State, or in the country districts, the great majority of the citizens want the park program carried out in spite of Republican leadership. (Applause.)

I am thankful to say that the public improvements initiated and fought through by the Governor are making splendid progress. Our hospitals are being modernized, and over seventeen thousand additional beds have been provided for wards and attendants of the State. Eighty-three building projects are under way to meet increased population in the State's prisons. Industrial buildings and new facilities are being provided at Sing Sing and Auburn, and Great Meadows and Napanoc, and

plans are being prepared for the new prison that is to accommodate two thousand people, at Attica.

While I am on this question of State's prisons, I want to make a point that the whole prison question presents a grave problem for today and possibly for the future, because of the undoubted increase in crime during the past few years. I am personally much interested in the crime question, by virtue of the fact that for several years I have been a member of the National Crime Commission, and I am familiar with the reports on this subject from every State in the Union. Any person who is familiar with this situation, not just here in New York, but in the west, the far west, the south and in New England, must recognize two unfortunate facts that have arisen during these past few years.

First, the age of criminals and of delinquents has shown a tremendous drop from previous years. Where ten years ago the average age of people convicted of crime was a little over 21, it is today nearer 18 years of age.

Secondly, as shown by every record everywhere

in the United States, the use of bootleg liquor bears an increasing responsibility for the commission of crime. Whether we live in the country or in the city, whether we live in this State or in another state, we know from personal observation of the effect of the present situation on the younger generation. And I want to quote the splendid words of Governor Smith in his speech of acceptance.

He said, "We have not achieved temperance under the present system. The mothers and fathers of young men and women throughout the land know the anxiety and worry which has been brought to them by their children's use of liquor in a way which was unknown before Prohibition. (Applause.) I believe in reverence for law. Today the disregard for the Prohibition Law is insidiously sapping respect for all law. I raise, therefore, what I profoundly believe to be the great moral issue involving the righteousness of our national conduct, and the protection of our children's morals." (Applause.)

In every state in this country there are from two to five times more arrests of minors for drunkenness and disorderly conduct than before the misnamed Prohibition

Law was put upon the Federal Statute Books. (Applause.) During the past four years I have spent much time in the State of Georgia, a state which had its own dry law years and years before the Volstead Law went into effect, and I can bear witness here in the State of New York, as I have borne witness publicly in the State of Georgia, that there is more consumption of distilled liquor per capita in Georgia, whether it be in the great cities like Atlanta, or in the rural sections of the State, than there is here in our State of New York. That I believe to be the fact, and I believe that the same fact applies to a great many other states that are today casting aspersions on our record in the State of New York. (Applause.)

Now, it is a fact that any legislative change in the present Federal Law is, of course, a matter for the Federal Congress. Many states in the Union have state statutes similar to and based upon the Federal Volstead Law. I know from personal observation in many of these states that the enforcement of Prohibition is in those states actually less effective than it is in the State of New York, where we operate under the Volstead

Law alone. It must therefore not be forgotten that-- it is still the duty of every peace officer in this State to make arrests for any violation in this State of the Volstead Law, just as much as any other Federal Statute, and no one need question my position in favor of law enforcement. (Applause.)

In view of the experience of other States, and in view of my conviction that an overwhelming respectable opinion in this State is opposed to the creation of a new set of machinery to add to the present confusion, graft and ineffectiveness of the Federal Law Enforcement system under the present government in Washington, there is no practical advantage in enacting another Mullen-Gage law as a part of the statutes of the State of New York. (Applause.)

That, my friends, is the way I feel about it. That is where I stand, and it is an interesting fact that I have not yet been able to learn what Mr. Ottinger's policy is, or indeed whether he has any policy at all. (Laughter.) Certainly his party has no policy. Its platform does not even mention prohibition. Aren't the people entitled to know before they vote?

And so we have talked about public improvements. We have talked about the struggle which our Governor has had in making headway not against the Republican party but against the Republican leadership.

I want to go down to Albany, and I am going down to Albany (applause), to carry out the greatest constructive program for good government of modern times. And when I go down there, if I have to have a Republican Legislature, I hope I can take care of them just the way Alfred E. Smith has done. (Loud Applause.) But I hope the people of the State won't make quite so much work necessary. I want to be able to get off occasionally from Albany and visit around this State, and that is why I want the cooperation of the believers in forward-looking government, not merely to send me down to Albany with a cabinet, a Lieutenant-Governor, an Attorney General, and a Comptroller who will talk my language (laughter), but I want them to help me and my cabinet by sending down there a Legislature who will talk the same language. (Applause.)

Time was when Oneida County did have Democratic members of the Senate and of the Assembly. I want that

good period to be restored. (Applause.)

Yes, it is going to be a mighty intelligent vote this year. It is going to be a big vote. It is going to be a thinking vote. People are not going to go blindly into the booth on Election Day and say, "I like that man," pull the lever for him, and go down and say, "I like that man," and pull the lever for him. They are going to think about effectiveness of government. They are going to think about business management of government. If there were a corporation in which you were a stockholder, you wouldn't put in a president who had one policy and a vice-president and cashier who had another policy. A corporation to be successful has got to have unity of command; and down there in Albany there are two sides to it, there is the Executive and the Legislative, and we will get better government in this State if we can have the executive branch of the government in accord with the legislative branch. We can keep on with the program of Smith, and we can take up the new problems before this State under the same great idealism, the same practical business management.

Yes, we need better and more intelligent care of our criminals and misdemeanants, youthful offenders.

We need better and more care of the problem of the health of the State. We need better educational facilities. We need still better roads. We need better labor and welfare laws. by seat of Poughkeepsie, and I used to

We are getting something very interesting in this State. It was twenty-five years ago that there came about throughout this country a thing known as community spirit. Chambers of Commerce, Kiwanis Clubs, and so on, got going. They began to boost their own communities. They accomplished great things. They started community chests, and practically every community of this country that has amounted to anything at all has acquired during these years the community spirit.

What is the next logical step? We need State spirit, and I believe that we have begun to get it. It is still in the formative period and we have a long ways to go, but this State, with the progress that it has made, with the great inventions of modern times, is becoming one cohesive unit. using of a trip today by automobile across the I have told the people many times that in my belief Henry Ford has done more for modern civilization than anybody in our generation. Why? He has made it

possible to enlarge the circle of our acquaintanceship. In the old days I used to live down there on the Hudson River in the little village of Hyde Park, five miles from the county seat of Poughkeepsie, and I used to drive into Poughkeepsie almost every day for shopping and various other things, and it was quite an event to drive back into the middle of the country or to drive along the river to the northern end of the county or south to the Putnam County line, and a person, a friend who lived twelve miles away, it was quite a drive to get to see him, and perhaps even though he might be an intimate friend, you would only see him once a month. And what has happened, in what, in twenty years, because before 1908 mighty few people had automobiles. Today, what is twelve miles between neighbors? What is twenty-five miles between neighbors? What is fifty miles?

And in those days we didn't know our State. We were lucky if we knew the adjoining county. All that has changed. It is nothing of a trip today by automobile across the State of New York. I ought to know. (Laughter.)

And so I believe that we have become state-minded; that people are going to think more and more

along the same lines, whether they live on the Hudson River or here along the line of the Central, or down on the Southern Tier, or up along the Canadian border. We are in the process of getting acquainted, and it is a mighty good thing. And more and more we are becoming determined to keep this progress going, to keep on showing our sister states how proud we are of the Government of the State of New York. (Applause.)

And so, my friends, it makes me think of the little old motto that I used to learn years and years ago, something about "Lend a hand," and as I remember it, it ran like this: we say that I do, but I have no

"Look outward and not in, look forward and not back; look upward and not down, and lend a hand." (Prolonged Applause.)

New York.

We started off a week ago last Wednesday, went through the Southern Tier. We went to Buffalo and we have come back along the line of the Central, with one trip up to Watertown, and everywhere that we came we found great enthusiasm for Governor Smith and the State Democratic Ticket—more enthusiasm than we have ever

Legislative Candidates - Eng. Brewer
Caleant " St. Louis Atty Gen. Campbell

Need more public improvements

Better & more intelligent care of our criminals
 misdoers & youthful offenders

Better & more care of the health & state

Better education

Better roads

Better labor & welfare laws

Step in more forward

Community spirit - Hanger, Ford,

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